Plot Plan vs. Boundary Survey

A Homeowner's Guide

What's the Difference?

- **Boundary Survey**
  A boundary survey is our **professional opinion** of where your property lines are located. We retrace or reestablish the lines using deed research, prior surveys, field measurements, and evidence found on the ground. It meets the **standards of practice** required by law. Like all surveys, it has a small margin of error and does not establish ownership, but it provides the best available evidence of your property limits.
- **Plot Plan**
  A plot plan is a **drawing for permitting purposes**. It shows where proposed improvements (like a new house, addition, or garage) sit in relation to **setbacks, easements, lot coverage, flood zones, and silt fence locations**. It uses the corners we find but **does not confirm if those corners are correct**, nor does it resolve discrepancies in property lines.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Which one do I need for a building permit?
A: You only need a **plot plan** for permitting.

Q: Can a plot plan show my property lines?
A: It may show found corners, but only a **boundary survey** confirms them to professional standards.

Q: Can you mark my property corners with a plot plan?
A: We can mark corners we find, but we do not verify them or set new ones without a boundary survey.

Q: How do you know if the house isn't over the setback if you can't verify the corners?
A: For a plot plan, we use found corners to measure setbacks. This is adequate for permitting. A boundary survey is needed to verify the corners.

Q: What if I want to stake a fence?
A: With a plot plan, we can stake it a safe distance inside the corners we find. If you want it directly on the line, you'll need a boundary survey.

Q: Why is a boundary survey more detailed?
A: Because it retraces the original surveyor's steps, considers gaps or overlaps, and identifies potential encroachments or conflicts. It provides a documented record, though like all surveys, it may or may not be upheld in court.

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Quick Comparison

	Plot Plan	Boundary Survey
Purpose	Building permits, showing improvements	Establishing or reestablishing property lines
Corners	Found but not verified	Verified and set to standards of practice
Accuracy	Stated on each drawing	Meets legal survey standards
Discrepancies	Not addressed	Identifies discrepancies, conflicts, and encroachments
Use for Fence	Safe distance inside	On the line

Use a Plot Plan for permits, additions, and general layout.

Use a Boundary Survey for fences on the line, disputes, property sales, and peace of mind.

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